



9 December 2004



## Holiday Season Safety

1. For many of us, the upcoming holiday season will be a time of joy and celebration with family and friends. For others, the holidays may be lonely or stressful. I ask you to take time over the next few weeks to think about USAREUR Soldiers and civilians who are deployed or are preparing to deploy in support of the Global War on Terrorism. Please reach out to those who need assistance, especially the families of deployed personnel and those who will be alone over the holidays. Most importantly, use this time to enjoy some well-deserved rest and relaxation.

2. As you relax this holiday season, do not to let down your guard. Our goal for the holiday season is zero fatalities. We can reach this goal by mitigating risks and using the chain of command to take care of people and maintain discipline throughout the holidays. The Holiday Safety and USAREUR Unit Safety Certification memorandum (available on the USAREUR homepage) lists areas of particular concern for commanders and first-line leaders. These include but are not limited to the following:

- **Excessive Alcohol Consumption.** The likelihood of alcohol-related incidents at this time of year is very high. The number of holiday functions increases the opportunities for drinking. In addition, many Soldiers returning from deployment will have an urge to consume alcohol. First-line leaders must remind Soldiers of the dangers of binge drinking, drinking too much, and drinking and driving. Those who plan to drink alcoholic beverages at holiday celebrations must ensure that they have a safe means to get home. Remember, a drunk-driving conviction can end a Soldier's career.

- **Vehicle Crashes.** Winter brings hazardous driving conditions (including black ice, fog, and snow) and fewer hours of daylight. These conditions, combined with roads crowded with holiday travelers, increase the likelihood of accidents. Driving too fast for road or weather conditions has caused or has been a factor in many car crashes, especially at this time of year. Those who will be traveling over the holidays should consider these factors when making their travel plans and ensure they allow themselves enough time to reach their destinations. First-line leaders must be actively engaged in the planning process by advising travelers to be prepared for bad weather and to drive defensively. By becoming personally involved in discussing and planning off-duty activities with subordinates and conducting *Under the Oak Tree* counseling, we can help ensure Soldiers will be safe over the holidays.

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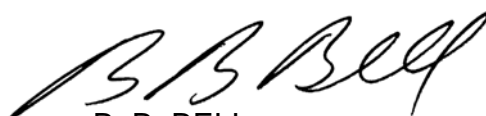
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• **Suicide and Domestic Violence.** This holiday period will be particularly demanding as USAREUR reconstitutes its forces, and Soldiers continue to deploy and redeploy. The holidays may be lonely for those separated from their families. Others may be under stress and could resort to spouse abuse or domestic violence. Commanders and first-line leaders must know how to recognize depression and suicidal behavior and respond accordingly. They also must encourage those who feel stressed to seek help. Chaplains are available throughout the Army in Europe to help families deal with many problems; leaders and Soldiers should not hesitate to ask them for help if needed.

• **Home Fires.** Take fire prevention seriously this holiday season. Everyone should test his or her smoke alarm and rehearse emergency evacuation plans. Keep in mind that candles are twice as likely to cause a residential fire in December as any other month. To avoid tragedy, ensure that candles and other holiday decorations, such as Christmas tree lights, do not pose a fire hazard.

• **Recreational Hazards.** Winter-sport activities such as skiing, sledding, and snowboarding increase the risk to our personnel, particularly those who are unaware of the hazards or who are not conditioned for the sport. Those who will be taking part in winter sports over the holidays should plan accordingly. They need to ensure they have the proper equipment, they need to take a lesson or two if they have never tried the sport before, and they need to ensure that everyone in their party is well-informed of the dangers associated with the particular sport.

3. I am grateful for your sacrifices and dedicated service to our Nation. With your complete commitment and sincere concern for the welfare of each and every member of the USAREUR family, we can achieve our goal of zero fatalities this holiday season. I encourage you to enjoy the holiday break and I wish you a safe and happy holiday!



B. B. BELL  
General, USA  
Commanding



**ANY MISSION, ANYWHERE!**